

If <u>James Neal</u> hadn't yet earned the right to be called the "real deal", he certainly has after this season. Neal has always been a potent goal scorer, but this year he has taken it to a whole new level. Not only have Neal's goal totals made a big jump in 2011-12, he also has improved his overall game offensively and become a much more well-rounded fantasy player.

Prior to this season Neal never had a campaign where he scored more than 27 goals and 55 points. This year he hit the 40 goal mark and had 81 points. So what changed for Neal in his

Written by Michael Amato

Tuesday, 10 April 2012 14:22 - Last Updated Tuesday, 10 April 2012 14:30
fourth NHL season? Well a healthy <b>Evgeni Malkin</b> is the main thing.
2010-11
Frequency
Strength
Line Combination
30.07%
EV
72 KOVALEV,ALEX - 10 LETESTU,MARK - 18 NEAL,JAMES
12.31%
EV

Written by Michael Amato Tuesday, 10 April 2012 14:22 - Last Updated Tuesday, 10 April 2012 14:30
72 KOVALEV,ALEX - 18 NEAL,JAMES - 11 STAAL,JORDAN
9.58%
EV
15 JEFFREY, DUSTIN - 72 KOVALEV, ALEX - 18 NEAL, JAMES
2011-12
Frequency
Strength
Line Combination
41.1%
EV

Written by Michael Amato Tuesday, 10 April 2012 14:22 - Last Updated Tuesday, 10 April 2012 14:30

14	KUNITZ, CHRIS -	71 MALKIN, EVGENI -	- 18 NEAL,JAMES
----	-----------------	---------------------	-----------------

15.3%

ΕV

71 MALKIN, EVGENI - 18 NEAL, JAMES - 26 SULLIVAN, STEVE

When Neal came over from Dallas midway through the 2010-11 season he managed to score just one goal in 20 games. This was mainly because he didn't get to play with Malkin, or <a href="Sidn">Sidn</a> ev Crosby

who was also injured at the time. With Malkin at his side in 2011-12 he has become a point-per-game player.

We all knew Neal could put the puck in the net, but the other impressive thing he has shown this year is the ability to raise his assist totals. This is directly related to the type of center he is now playing with. Malkin is a pure scorer as evident by his 50 goals on the season, so naturally Neal's assist totals are going to rise. In Dallas he mainly played with <a href="Brad Richards">Brad Richards</a> who is a set up man, so the likelihood of Neal's assist totals being high in Big D were not realistic. Neal had 41 assists this year and never had more than 28 with the Stars.

Written by Michael Amato Tuesday, 10 April 2012 14:22 - Last Updated Tuesday, 10 April 2012 14:30

In addition to playing with one of the top players in the NHL, Neal has also increased his scoring chances by shooting more. Last season Neal took just 212 shots, while this year he fired 329 pucks at the net.

Rank			
Player			
Pos			
Team			
GP			
Total			
1			
MALKIN,	EVGENI		
С			

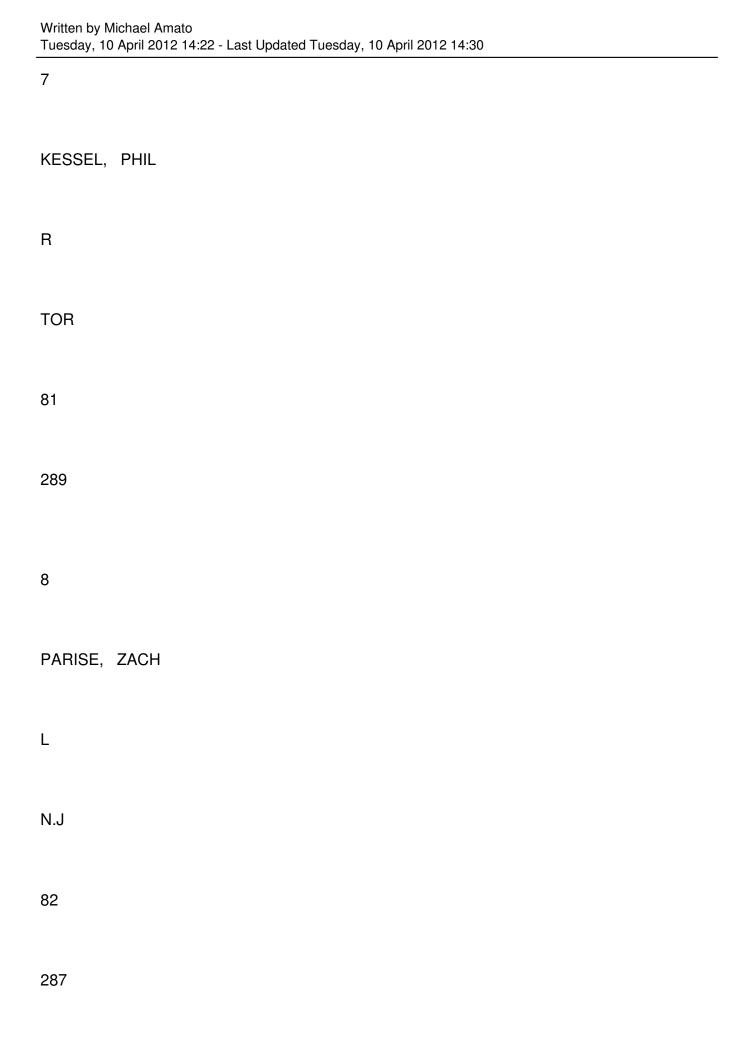
Written by Michael Amato

Tuesday, 10 April 2012 14:22 - Last Updated Tuesday, 10 April 2012 14:30 PIT 75 339 2 NEAL, JAMES L PIT 80 329 3 KOVALCHUK, ILYA

Written by Michael Amato Tuesday, 10 April 2012 14:22 - Last Updated Tuesday, 10 April 2012 14:30
L
N.J
77
305
4
NASH, RICK
R
CBJ
81
303
5

Written by Michael Amato

Tuesday, 10 April 2012 14:22 - Last Updated Tuesday, 10 April 2012 14:30 OVECHKIN, ALEXANDER L **WSH** 78 302 6 STAMKOS, STEVEN С T.B 81 299



Written by Michael Amato

Tuesday, 10 April 2012 14:22 - Last Updated Tuesday, 10 April 2012 14:30 That's an increase of over 100 shots from the previous year and good enough for second in the league. If ten percent of those manage to cross the line, that's an increase of ten goals. Neal can also help fantasy owners when it comes to the man advantage. He led the NHL in power play goals with 18, which doubled his previous career high of nine. Neal averaged 3:55 of power play time per game this season, and that was an increase from the 2:34 he averaged last season. Neal averages just over 19 minutes of ice time per game so he plays nearly 20 percent of the game with a man up. Naturally his numbers in that area are going to improve drastically. Another added bonus when it comes to Neal for poolies is his penalty minutes. He led the Penguins in PIM this season with 87. Rank Name

Written by Michael Amato

Tuesday, 10 April 2012 14:22 - Last Updated Tuesday, 10 April 2012 14:30 Pos Age Yrs Team GR GP Total 1 **NEAL, JAMES** L 24 3

Written by Michael Amato Tuesday, 10 April 2012 14:22 - Last Updated Tuesday, 10 April 2012 14:30		
PIT		
1		
80		
87		
2		
ASHAM,ARRON		
R		
33		
12		
PIT		
1		

Written by Michael Amato Tuesday, 10 April 2012 14:22 - Last Updated Tuesday, 10 April 2012 14:30
64
76
3
MALKIN, EVGENI
C
25
5
PIT
1
75
70

Written by Michael Amato

Tuesday, 10 April 2012 14:22 - Last Updated Tuesday, 10 April 2012 14:30

4 **ORPIK,BROOKS** D 31 8 PIT 1 73 61 5 **ENGELLAND, DERYK** D

Written by Michael Amato Tuesday, 10 April 2012 14:22 - Last Updated Tuesday, 10 April 2012 14:30		
30		
2		
PIT		
1		
73		
<b>5</b> 0		
56		
5		
<u>VITALE,JOE</u>		
C		
26		
20		
1		

Written by Michael Amato Tuesday, 10 April 2012 14:22 - Last Updated Tuesday, 10 April 2012 14:30 PIT 1 68 56 6 **KUNITZ, CHRIS** L 32 7 PIT 1 82

